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Security Council

Sixty-sixth year

Provisional

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Thursday, 24 March 2011, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Li Baodong	(China)
Members:	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ms. Čolaković
	Brazil	Mrs. Dunlop
	Colombia	Mr. Osorio
	France	Mr. Briens
	Gabon	Mr. Moungara Moussotsi
	Germany	Mr. Berger
	India	Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri
	Lebanon	Mr. Assaf
	Nigeria	Mr. Amieyeofori
	Portugal	Mr. Moraes Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	South Africa	Mr. Mashabane
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Mr. Dunn

Agenda

The situation in Sierra Leone

Sixth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) (S/2011/119)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Sierra Leone

Sixth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (S/2011/119)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Sierra Leone to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Joseph Dauda, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Sierra Leone.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg, Executive Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. John McNee, Chairperson of the Sierra Leone country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Canada, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2011/119, containing the sixth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone.

I now give the floor to Mr. von der Schulenburg.

Mr. Von der Schulenburg: I thank you, Sir, for giving me this opportunity to introduce the sixth report of the Secretary-General on Sierra Leone (S/2011/119).

This biannual review of Sierra Leone's progress towards peace and stability takes place at a time of dramatic political events that are unfolding in many countries of Northern Africa, adjacent regions and places closer to home, such as Côte d'Ivoire. Much of the attention of the international community, and indeed of this Council, is now directed at finding urgent solutions to these political and security developments, which are bound to shape the future of the entire region.

Against this background, political developments in Sierra Leone may appear pale in comparison. However, I would like to argue that the events in Northern Africa and adjacent regions may make it even more important for the Security Council not to lose sight of Sierra Leone and to continue to give it the attention it deserves and still needs.

Sierra Leone, which was once a symbol of a failed State, is now gradually evolving into a model country for overcoming old divisions and developing into a peaceful, democratic and prosperous country. Success in Sierra Leone would create hope, and hope is possibly the best ingredient for finding political solutions for peace in other countries. That is why I believe that any success in Sierra Leone is also bound to have its own ripple effect on the search for peace in other countries. Sierra Leone is on track towards achieving these goals, but it is not yet out of the woods. It will therefore continue to require international attention and support.

In Sierra Leone, it was also disillusioned young people who initially rose up against years of successive authoritarian and unaccountable Governments, against the plunder of its natural resources, and against widespread corruption that benefited a small elite while much of the country slid into widespread poverty. It was mainly the young people who felt marginalized and protested against the continuous deterioration of social services, the lowering of educational standards and the lack of job opportunities. At the time, Sierra Leone was unable to solve its growing unrest, and the country submerged into 11 years of a brutal and devastating civil war.

It is now nine years since Sierra Leone's civil war ended. During this short time, Sierra Leone has made a truly remarkable post-conflict recovery. When my Sierra Leonean friends see the images from a number of other African and Middle Eastern countries, it ignites in them the tragic memories of the recent past, but at the same time there is also a sense of pride among them in what they achieved over time. I fully share that pride.

Sierra Leoneans now elect their Governments, not only at the central level but also at the district and

local levels. These elections take place regularly, and as in all other democratic processes they have led to the transfer of power from one elected Government to another, both at the central and the local levels. The conduct of these elections is not always without problems, but what is encouraging is that elections in Sierra Leone have become the norm.

Today, Sierra Leoneans live largely at peace with each other, there is discernible security throughout the country, and citizens as well as foreigners are all free to travel to any part of Sierra Leone without any fear or security threats. There are no longer any armed groups terrorizing the population, nor are there any former warlords with a political following in the country. Sierra Leone no longer has any political prisoners, and after years of brutalities there are no longer any manifestations of systematic human rights abuses in the country. Freedom of speech has given rise to an independent, diverse and at times highly critical media. Sierra Leone's freedom of association has resulted in the creation of vibrant and active political parties, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations and professional associations.

Above all, Sierra Leone remains a rare example of exceptional religious freedoms and tolerance. It is the diversity of Sierra Leone's society, in which modern State authorities cooperate with traditional leaderships, in which political parties interact with independent media, and in which Muslim and Christian communities work together closely with civil society organizations that drives the country's evolving democratic culture.

As we witness developments in Northern Africa and adjacent regions, we must realize that Sierra Leone's achievements are by no means automatic or self-evident. These achievements are even more remarkable when we consider that Sierra Leone had a less fortunate start as a new nation, that it is a much poorer country, and that its population is largely illiterate.

Despite all achievements in overcoming its civil war, Sierra Leone will remain fragile and vulnerable to sudden economic, social and political shocks, both from outside and from within the country. As Sierra Leone is one of the world's poorest countries, the capacity of the Government to absorb any adverse shock will continue to remain weak. For example, recent concerns over excessive budgetary expenditures, although small by any standards, could suddenly turn into a sequence of incalculable political fallouts.

In a country in which the large majority of its people live on less than $2 per day and with a relatively small revenue base, even problems that should be manageable — such as hikes in international oil prices, increases in rice prices, the failure to pay salaries on time, unfinished public work programmes, and insufficient rains, combined with a large population of unemployed and disillusioned young people — could explode beyond control and threaten Sierra Leone's hard-won achievements.

Any past, present and future Government in Sierra Leone is therefore compelled to walk a very fine line between mounting needs and financial constraints; between the lure of a globalized economy and the aspirations of it local population; and between the demands on the Government to accelerate development, coupled with a lack of budgetary and human resources at its disposal. That is indeed the reason why I believe that Sierra Leone will continue to need strong international assistance, in particular development assistance.

Let me also reflect on the two critical issues that I had brought to the Council's attention during its review of Sierra Leone in September (see S/PV.6391). These are the exploitation of natural resources and the 2012 elections. At the end of my statement, I would also like to talk about progress that is being made in implementing resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security.

Although challenges remain, I am encouraged by the progress the Government has made on mining and the elections over the past six months. Since our last meeting, the President has repeatedly stressed in public and in private that he is determined to ensure that the exploitation of Sierra Leone's rich mineral and possibly hydrocarbon resources will be transparent and for the benefit all Sierra Leoneans. Recently, the President separated the previously combined Ministries for Political Affairs and Natural Resources and Mining, an important step that will allow the Government to deal with the all important issue of mineral exploration in a professional and politically more neutral manner. The President has kept his pledge and initiated a review of all old and new mining contracts to ensure their conformity with Sierra Leone's mining laws.

After initial difficulties, the Government has now renewed its commitment to fully implement the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative process in consultation with civil society and other stakeholders. The Government has agreed with the World Bank and United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) on a major technical assistance programme to improve its capacity to manage the exploitation of its mineral resources. Similarly, the Government has agreed with Norway and the United States on a comprehensive technical assistance programme to reform and strengthen its institutions dealing with oil and gas exploration and exploitation matters.

However, the possible transition of Sierra Leone into a major exporter of mineral and hydrocarbon resources could test the country's social cohesion and provoke greater social changes than previously envisaged. For Sierra Leone to succeed in that vital endeavour, much wider national consultations may be required in the future.

Considerable progress has also been made in preparing for the 2012 elections. In January, the Government and its development partners — mainly DFID, the European Union, Germany and Irish Aid — agreed to fund a large election support programme that will be jointly implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL). Recently, the United States agreed to a parallel but well-coordinated contribution for the 2012 elections. In addition to the more traditional support to electoral management bodies, the security services and the judiciary, the election support programme will for the first time include the introduction of modern biometric voter registration systems and support to the so-called non-State actors, aimed at ensuring an environment of political tolerance and non-violence in 2012.

Despite the progress made so far, the 2012 elections still face a number of important challenges. First, and probably most important, there has to be greater and more regular engagement between the National Electoral Commission and political parties, including the main opposition party, the Sierra Leone People's Party, over important electoral issues, such as voter registration, planned reforms of electoral legal frameworks, the planning for elections and so on. It is important that all sides agree on the rules of the game as early as possible, to prevent misunderstanding and conflicts over the interpretation and implementation of the rules at a later stage.

Secondly, with the nomination of its new chairman and commissioners, the Political Party Registration Commission (PPRC) should now engage more forcefully in mediating among political parties and in implementing the political party, code of conduct.

Thirdly, strong political parties are the cornerstones in any functioning democracy. Together with the PPRC, we must find ways to strengthen them. Recent intra-party frictions within a major political party remain worrisome, and certainly not in the interest of the country's democratic process.

Fourthly, on the background of recent budgetary constraints, the Government must give early indication as to what it will be able to afford in supporting the 2012 elections. In particular, the electoral management bodies should critically review their stated requirements in order to bring them in line with available resources for 2012.

Fifthly, to ensure peaceful elections, Sierra Leone's security forces, and in particular its police force, will have to improve their skills in preventing the use of unnecessary force. In that context, the mobility of police units is paramount. I hope that Member States will be able to respond to a call by the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) for additional police vehicles.

Finally, Sierra Leone's civil society organizations engaged in the elections, in particular the National Election Watch umbrella organization, should be given the financial and technical resources necessary to fulfill their important roles in voter education and in monitoring voter registration and the electoral process in 2012.

As this is the tenth year of resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, allow me to say a few words about the role of women and gender equality in Sierra Leone. The empowerment of women and greater gender equality must be an integral part of peacebuilding processes. As democracy in Sierra Leone has matured, so have the chances for women. Indeed, it is now within reach to ensure women's greater say in political decision-making and to attain a 30 per cent quota of women representation in Parliament and other elective bodies by 2012.

In the economic and social fields, it will be above all women who benefit from the Government's free health care initiative. After the first year of operation, we can observe that maternal mortality rates have dropped dramatically in some parts of the country. Similar initiatives are being undertaken to increase the enrolment of girls in secondary education and to fight any kind of gender-based violence.

In line with our Joint Vision for Sierra Leone — the joint United Nations programme — UNIPSIL and the United Nations country team have developed a joint United Nations approach to peacebuilding and gender equality, which we will present at the PBC tomorrow. It will focus on five priority areas, namely, access to political decision-making, access to health, access to education, access to justice and protection against gender-based violence. To implement this joint approach, we will work closely with the Government, the political parties, the police, the judiciary, civil society organizations and religious and traditional leaders, as well as with traditional women's organizations, including so-called bondo societies. I believe that the progress that we can now achieve in empowering women will no doubt help to consolidate peace, development and social progress in Sierra Leone.

Before I conclude my statement, I would like to draw attention to the fact that we have quite a lot of support with us. Behind me here are members of civil society organizations from Sierra Leone, which I think is a great symbol of the diversity of society in the country. They include leaders from the women's wings of the political parties, who will tomorrow present to the PBC their plans for reaching the 30 per cent target for women's participation in decision-making. Also with me are two civil society goodwill ambassadors who help to build schools in Sierra Leone. I would like to congratulate them on the good work they are doing. And we have post-graduate students from Colombia University and New York University. Finally, I would like to say that I am accompanied by two of my colleagues from the United Nations country team, Ms. Mia Seppo from UNDP and Ms. Ratidzai Ndlovu from the United Nations Population Fund. We asked them here today to illustrate to the Council and the Peacebuilding Commission the unity and integration we have achieved in Sierra Leone, which will not only benefit the Council but, ultimately, the country itself.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Von der Schulenburg for his briefing.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. John McNee.

Mr. McNee: It is a great pleasure to brief the Security Council in my capacity as Chair of the Sierra Leone configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). At the outset, I would like to commend the impressive work of the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, and indeed of the entire United Nations country team, in support of Sierra Leone's progress and development. Mr. von der Schulenburg has given us a very clear and insightful briefing this morning.

Sierra Leone is entering another transition period. This phase, marked by a gradual shift in emphasis from late-stage peacebuilding towards longer-term economic development, will be largely defined by three processes, namely, the continued pursuit of the Agenda for Change, which is Sierra Leone's national strategy for peace consolidation and economic growth; the conduct of elections in 2012; and the steady realignment of international assistance behind development priorities. I would like to focus on each of those processes briefly and outline the PBC's anticipated activities during the next six months.

First, I would like to commend the tremendous strides that the Government and people of Sierra Leone have made since the conclusion of the conflict. The PBC is particularly pleased at the advances that have been made in three areas of focus, that is, good governance and the rule of law, youth employment and drug trafficking. However, in spite of that progress, each of those issues still represents a long-term risk to Sierra Leone's stability. Each will require concerted attention from the national Government and from international community. As such, I would like to reiterate the need for continued financial support.

The United Nations multi-donor trust fund established to fund the Joint Vision and to support the Agenda for Change remains nearly $175 million short of its $381 million objective. For its part, the PBC's Sierra Leone country configuration will be active with donors and other key partners to help address Sierra Leone's outstanding peacebuilding challenges. The configuration will also continue to seek innovative non-financial contributions to support the Agenda for

Change by facilitating South-South and North-South partnerships.

Secondly, Sierra Leone also faces a more immediate challenge in conducting successful national and local elections in 2012. It is essential that political conditions be established for free, fair and peaceful elections. That will require continued progress on implementing the agreements in the joint communiqué of April 2009, further strengthening the Political Party Registration Commission and providing the National Electoral Commission with the necessary support. It is especially important that the national institutions charged with overseeing the elections, and the major political parties, build a stronger relationship based on improved cooperation and mutual trust. Successful elections depend on the commitment of the parties that contest them to play by the rules and respect the results. The elections must be not only technically sound, but also widely accepted.

In that respect, the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone have played an invaluable role in facilitating open dialogue and building relevant national capacities. The PBC fully supports those efforts and will focus more directly on elections preparations in the coming year.

Should the necessary support be provided, there is every reason to be optimistic. Last December's peaceful by-election in Kono district demonstrates that collective efforts to avoid violence can yield powerful results. It is telling that the Sierra Leone police played a significant role in the successful by-election. Unfortunately, the police lack the capacity to perform a similar service throughout the country. We see that as an important gap. Continuing to build the capacity of the Sierra Leone police to serve as a neutral and effective force for stability is critical. The Sierra Leone configuration has reiterated its appeal to the international community to ensure that the police have the necessary resources at their disposal — particularly vehicles, parts and fuel — to respond to cases of election-related violence in a timely manner.

Thirdly, the PBC will continue to have an important role to play in the next two years as focus shifts further from peacebuilding to development. However, a number of risks will endure over the longer term. Sierra Leone's significant youth population expects progress and prosperity. Disappointment could present a latent risk of political instability. In that respect, rising investment in natural resources offers promise for economic growth, but also poses a number of challenges, some of which the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General outlined this morning. That was a major topic of discussion during my most recent visit to Freetown. The international community, including the PBC, should be prepared to respond promptly to any requests for technical assistance or other forms of support.

Sierra Leone will also have to contend with threats from outside its borders. Sustainable economic development depends heavily on stability within the subregion and on access to the assistance necessary to weather any financial difficulties. Similarly, the flow of illicit drugs and other forms of trafficking remains a serious challenge, with the potential to encourage corruption, undermine democratic progress and create new socio-economic problems.

Those challenges demand continued support and a wider regional focus. The Sierra Leone configuration seeks to build stronger partnerships with relevant international institutions and regional actors to address those issues. It will also encourage closer collaboration between the four West African country configurations of the Peacebuilding Commission to facilitate the pooling of resources, the exchange of national approaches and the adoption of regional initiatives in order to address those shared challenges, particularly in the areas of illicit drug trafficking and youth unemployment. A recent regional seminar on youth unemployment, sponsored by the Austrian Government and the Peacebuilding Support Office, as well as the West African Coast Initiative, sponsored by the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States, are two examples of the kinds of partnerships through which the PBC will support more effective action on transborder risks.

In conclusion, Sierra Leone rightly stands as a multilateral success story in peacebuilding. Yet the story is not quite finished. One of the important lessons learned over the past two decades is that peacebuilding requires constant and continued support. Faltering now would risk all that has been gained. I therefore strongly encourage all donors and partners to provide Sierra Leone with the support it needs to pursue its Agenda for Change, conduct successful elections and embark on long-term development. As always, the

Peacebuilding Commission stands ready to be a constructive partner through that transitional process.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. McNee for his briefing.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Joseph Dauda, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Dauda (Sierra Leone): Let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March. I also wish to extend a warm welcome to the representatives of the new members of the Council. I would also like to thank you, Sir, for convening this meeting on the situation in Sierra Leone, as well as for giving my delegation the opportunity to contribute to this debate.

On behalf of my delegation, I wish to express our sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for his detailed report (S/2011/119) on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL). Among other things, the report highlights the important developments that have taken place in the country, the challenges to surmount and, of course, the activities of UNIPSIL during the period under review. I would also like to thank the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General for introducing the report.

In a similar vein, we appreciate the Council's sustained engagement and interest in Sierra Leone as we continue to work in partnership to ensure sustainable peace and development in the country. We are also grateful for the indomitable efforts of the Sierra Leone configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), through the tireless efforts of its Chairperson, Ambassador John McNee of Canada, to maintain the momentum. We also thank him for his progressive and innovative efforts and his instructive remarks in contributing to this debate.

We take note of, and acknowledge with satisfaction, the reference made in the report to some of the progress and achievements since September 2010 and the challenges that we still have to contend with. Those achievements are the product of the joint efforts of the Government and people of Sierra Leone and the United Nations, through the United Nations Joint Vision aligned with the Agenda for Change and development partners. To that end, I would like to express my appreciation for the investment that has been made in successful peacebuilding efforts and to encourage the further consolidation of the gains made by continuing to stand by Sierra Leone as it deals comprehensively with the remaining challenges and invests and builds on the success already achieved.

His Excellency President Ernest Bai Koroma, in partnership with the international community, remains fully committed to consolidating peacebuilding and the sustainable economic development of Sierra Leone as mapped out in the Agenda for Change. Youth unemployment, corruption and illegal narcotics were the three risks identified in the Agenda for Change and endorsed by the Sierra Leone PBC configuration in its outcome document of September 2010.

As reflected in the report, we are making steady progress in the fight against corruption and, with the support of development partners and the United Nations, we have created the structures at the local and regional levels to stem drug trafficking and organized crime. In response to youth unemployment, which remains a significant challenge to the peace consolidation process, a new Ministry of Youth Employment and Sports has been established and a national Youth Commissioner and Board have been appointed to provide the policy framework and implementation that would pave way for the meaningful participation of young people in national development.

The Government is fully cognizant of the importance of some of the issues raised by the Secretary-General in the report regarding the implementation of the joint communiqué of 2 April 2009 and has, in that regard, with UNIPSIL's support, established the All Political Parties Youth Association and the All Political Parties Women's Association aimed at preventing political violence, fostering inter-party dialogue and, in the case of the Women's Association, further enhancing women's participation in politics. Here, I am happy to report that 14.5 per cent of political offices are now held by women, almost halfway to our target of 30 per cent. We also continue to make progress towards the education of the girl child and providing free health care to pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under the age of five.

The Government remains committed to the conduct of peaceful, free, fair and transparent elections in 2012, and we welcome the support of the United

Nations and development partners in passing what has come to be identified as a key test for the consolidation of peace and stability in Sierra Leone. The National Electoral Commission and the Political Parties Registration Commission enjoy the independence to deliver effectively on their constitutional mandates, free of interference. Additionally, structures, such as the former national broadcasting service, which was recently transformed into the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation, the Independent Media Commission and the Editors' Guild are also of added value.

President Ernest Bai Koroma recently made his Cabinet more inclusive by appointing ministers from across political and regional divides to further promote national unity and cohesion. He has equally been responsive to concerns regarding the mining sector by taking measures to improve the governance of the sector, ensure greater transparency and maximize benefits from the country's mineral resources. To that end, we have sought the support of development partners to build the capacity of the Ministry of Mines and Mineral Resources.

Despite all these efforts of the Government and the progress that has been made to date in addressing the many problems that led to the civil war, the sustained support of the international community and our development partners is required if we are to build on the gains made and to further consolidate peacebuilding in Sierra Leone, as well as to enhance the country's capacity to absorb shocks, be they economic, social or political. Support is still required in several areas, in particular youth unemployment; the provision of vehicles to the Sierra Leone Police to enhance their capability and visibility during and after the elections; drug trafficking; and the reparations process as recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

On the socio-economic front, prevailing global economic and financial uncertainties are seriously undermining our efforts to turn the economy around as quickly as we would wish. In the light of the severe impact of these uncertainties on our efforts and in support of the strides we have made in socio-economic development, we urge and support the appeal that urgent and appropriate attention be given to the delivery of pledges made at the most recent consultative conference on Sierra Leone, held in London.

His Excellency President Ernest Bai Koroma is committed to reducing aid dependency through partnership with the private sector, in particular in the mineral and agricultural sectors, and recognizes the importance of strengthening institutions that will drive the economy, leading to the ratification by Parliament of the Public Private Partnership Act of 2010, which aims at providing the legal framework for the private sector to design, build and administer major infrastructure development programmes with the intention of attracting more foreign investment.

In conclusion, we welcome recent developments in Guinea resulting in the conduct of peaceful, free and fair elections and the smooth transfer of power to an elected Government. This development will contribute to peace consolidation efforts in Sierra Leone. However, we see the situation in Côte d'Ivoire as a threat to subregional peace and security and we support subregional, regional and other international efforts to adequately address it before it escalates into a full-blown conflict that could undermine the stability of its neighbours, including Sierra Leone.

Once more, I wish to thank the United Nations, the Peacebuilding Commission and all development partners for their contributions to the peace we have achieved so far.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Minister Dauda for his statement.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.